A note on the "Many Meanings of the Rigvedic term *Vritra* (वृत्र)"

VR Patil (email:vrpmet@yahoo.com)

In the **Ten Mandalas of Rigved**, along with the Supreme Vedic God **Indra**, a demonic character **Vritra** is seen as a warring pair in the several hymns. A regular pattern of conflicts or frequent deadly fights between the great warrior **Indra** and the devil **Vritra** form the **central idea** behind the Rigvedic compositions. In the present note, we are going to discuss about how the Rigvedic term **Vritra** has been applied by the various Poets in the **different contexts**.

I. **Annihilation of an atmospheric demon "Vritra"**:

This section has been intentionally divided into two parts as described below.

Part-1: Fictional killing of Vritra by Indra; and **Part-2: Factual defeat of Vritra**

Part-1: Vritra is habitually killed by God Indra using *Vajra*

The Composers from different families and generations in the several **Songs of Praise** have often described mythical fight between their beloved God **Indra** and demon **Vritra**. It means to say that whether the Priests resided in the eastern part of Rigvedic Territory or the west side of river **Sindhu**, at the time of **Yajna**, through the composed poems, frequently glorified **Indra** as the victor in war. The reason behind the fierce rivalry between **Indra** and **Vritra** is the paucity of water in the **Indian Sub-continent** during the **Bronze Age Period**. Following information taken from the Early Mandalas convey us about the role of demonic character **Vritra** in making the Vedic People to suffer.

Rv-2.14,2: ***apo vavrivāṃsaṃ vṛtraṃ*/ Vritra withholds water**.

Rv-4.16,7: ***apo vṛtraṃ vavrivāṃsam* / demon Vritra obstructs water/flood**.

Rv-6.20,2: ***ahiṃ yad vṛtramapo vavrivāṃsaṃ* / dragon Vritra encloses water**.

From the content of above three verses, it is obvious that the People of Vedic period firmly believed that it is **Vritra** who took the water of whole world in his captivity. Hence the demonic character **Vritra** is generally understood as the **personification of drought**. In fact, the **Mandala-8** Poet has credited the entry of God **Indra** in the **Early Vedic Philosophy** to the arrival of **Vritra** (**drought**) in the world.

Rv-8.93,14 : *vi yadaheradha tviṣo viśve devāso akramuḥ | vidan mṛgasya tānamaḥ* ||

When in their terror all the Gods shrank from the Dragon's furious might,
Fear of the monster fell on them.

Rv-8.89,5: *yajjāyathā apūrvya maghavan vṛtrahatyāya |*
tat pṛthivīmaprathayastadastabhnā uta dyām ||

When thou, unequalled **Maghavan, wast born to smite the Vrtras dead**,
Thou spreadest out the spacious earth and didst support and prop the heavens.

The verse **Rv-8.93,14** tells us as soon as **Vritra** is arrived in the world, the Old Gods (Seven Adityas) disappeared from the scene leaving all the living beings at the mercy of the demon. Content of the verse **Rv-8.89,5** indicates that a new warrior God **Indra/Maghavan** is conceived mainly to smite **Vritra** as the Old Vedic Gods failed to take on the demon.

Many Rigvedic Poets in the composed Poems have often described that **Indra** regularly uses his the most powerful weapon ***Vajra***/**Thunderbolt** to kill **Vritra**. Additionally, many Composers have spoken about **Indra's never ending love for Soma Juice** as well.

Rv-5.29,2: *anu yad īm maruto mandasānam ārcann **indram** papivāṃsaṃ sutasya |*
*ādatta **vajram** abhi yad ahiṃ hann apo yahvīr asṛjat sartavā u* ||

What time the Maruts sang their **song to Indra, joyous when he had drunk of Soma juices**,
He grasped his thunderbolt to slay the Dragon, and loosed, that they might flow, the youthful Waters.

Following verses selected from the different Mandalas clearly depict that even when the **Mandala-10**, (the **Last Mandala of Rigved**) was being composed, there was continuation of a fierce battle between **Indra and Vritra**. Contents of the following verses show that the generations of the Rigvedic Poets purposefully focused their attention on the **fabulous story** of **Indra and Vritra** fight that was originated before the Rigvedic period. Therefore, it can be concluded that, genuinely, there was **paucity of water** in the many localities of **Rigvedic Territory**, especially in the eastern region (adjoining river **Saraswati/Ilaspade** area).

Rv-3.45,2: *vṛtrakhādo valaṃrujaḥ purāṃ darmo apāmajaḥ |*
sthātā rathasya haryorabhisvara indro dṛḷhā cidārujaḥ ||

He who slew **Vrtra,** burst the cloud, brake the strongholds and drave the floods,

Indra who mounts his chariot at his Bay Steeds' cry, shatters even things that stand most firm.

Rv-8.93,2: *nava yo navatiṃ puro bibheda bāhvojasā | **ahiṃ** ca **vṛtra**hāvadhīt ||*

Him who with might of both his arms brake nine-and-ninety castles down,
Slew **Vrtra** and smote **Ahi** dead.

Rv-8.92,5: *taṃ vabhi prārcatendraṃ somasya pītaye | tadid dhyasyavardhanam ||*

Call **Indra loudly** with your songs of praise to drink the **Soma juice**.
For this is what augments his strength.

Rv-8.93,15: *ā u me nivaro bhuvad vṛtrahādiṣṭa pauṃsyam | ajātaśatrurastṛtaḥ ||*

Then he was my Defender, then, Invincible, whose foe is not,
The **Vrtra-slayer** showed his might.

Rv-1.32.5: *ahan **vṛtraṃ vṛtrataraṃ** vyaṃsamindro vajreṇa mahatā vadhena |*
skandhāṃsīva kuliśenā vivṛkṇāhiḥ śayata upapṛk pṛthivyāḥ ||

Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces **Vrtra, worst of Vrtras**.
As trunks of trees, what time the axe hath felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate Dragon.

Rv-1.32,7: *apādahasto apṛtanyadindramāsya vajramadhi sānau jaghāna |*
vṛṣṇo vadhriḥ pratimānaṃ bubhūṣan purutrā vṛtro aśayad vyastaḥ ||

Footless and handless still he challenged Indra, who smote him with his **bolt** between the shoulders.
Emasculate yet claiming manly vigour, thus **Vrtra lay with scattered limbs dissevered**.

Rv-10.147,1: *śrat te dadhāmi prathamāya manyave.ahan yad **vṛtraṃ** naryaṃviverapaḥ |*
ubhe yat tvā bhavato rodasī anu rejateśuṣmāt pṛthivī cidadrivaḥ ||

I trust in thy first wrathful deed, **O Indra, when thou slewest Vrtra** and didst work to profit man;
What time the two world-halves fell short of thee in might, and the earth trembled at thy force, O **Thunder-armed**.

The **Mandala-4 Poet** through the verse **Rv-4.30,1** has told us that among the several Vedic Gods, **only Indra is capable to slay demon Vritra**.

Rv-4.30,1: *nakir **indra** tvad uttaro na jyāyāṃ asti **vṛtrahan** | nakir evā yathā tvam ||*

O **Indra**, **Vrtra-slayer**, none is **bette**r, **mightier** than thou. Verily there is none like thee.

Moreover, many Rigvedic Composers have described that God **Twastar** has shaped the ***Vajra***/thunderbolt of **Indra** and some of these verses are: **Rv-1.32,2**; **Rv-1.61,6**; **Rv-1.52,7**; **Rv-6.17,10**; **Rv-10.48,3**. Yet in **Mandala-1** verse **Rv-1.84,13** there is a mention of ancient Rishi **Dadhyach** offered his **bones**/***Asthi*** in **Yajna** to fashion ***Vajra*/thunderbolt of Indra**.

Rv-1.61,6: *asmā idu **tvaṣṭā takṣad vajraṃ** svapastamaṃ svaryaṃ raṇāya |*
vṛtrasya cid vidad yena marma tujannīśānastujatā kiyedhāḥ ||

Even for him hath **Tvastar forged the thunder**, most deftly wrought, celestial, for the battle,
Wherewith he reached the vital parts of Vrtra, striking-the vast, the mighty with the striker.

Rv-1.84,13: *indro dadhīco asthabhirvṛtrāṇyapratiṣkutaḥ |jaghāna navatīrnava ||*

With **bones of Dadhyac** for **his arms**, **Indra**, resistless in attack,
Struck nine-and-ninety Vrtras dead.

Please note that in the **Ten Mandalas of Rigved**, there are more than **45 references of Vritras** (**plural**). Hence it can be said that **killing of Vritra** was not at all onetime event. Use of the term **Vritras** (as **plural**) in several hymns signals that the during the Rigvedic period, the Indian Sub-continent was definitely reeling under severe but the long duration droughts.

Additionally, in some hymns, on a few occasions, the Composers have spoken about God **Indra** takes the help of other Vedic Gods to smite **Vritra** and those Gods are; **Agni**, **Vishnu**, **Brahmanaspati**, **Maruts** etc.

Practically speaking, **Vritra** is the manifestation of total failure of the seasonal rains or the Indian Monsoon during the **Bronze Age Period** causing disorder in the world and hence leading to uncertainty in life. In true sense, by creating an **evil character** in the form of **Vritra**, the Vedic People came out with the supernatural explanation to underline the shadow of natural phenomenon on the all living beings. In reality, a poetic depiction of a demonic character **Vritra** has transformed a **natural disaster** into a **religious belief with ease**. Rigvedic references of **killing of Many Vritras** throughout the period of composition of **Ten Mandalas** indicate a series of the long duration droughts.

Part-2: Instead of *Vajra*, Vritra is killed with the help of natural means

Two Mandala-8 verses describe the **killing of Vritra** by the natural ways.

a. Indra uses *Hima*/Snow instead of Vajra to kill Vritra and Arbuda:

The verse **Rv-8.32,26** belongs to the hymn addressed to **Indra** points out an unusual tale which is not at all found in any hymn of the **Six Family Mandalas of Rigved** (**Mandala-2 to 7**).

Rv-8.32,26: *ahan* ***vṛtraṃ*** *ṛcīṣama aurṇavābhamahīśuvam* | ***hime****nāvidhyadarbudam* ||

He, meet for praise, slew **Vritra**, slew Ahisuva, Urnavabha's son,
And pierced through **Arbuda with frost**.

In the above verse, our focus is on the word ***Himen***/ **हिमेन** as it presents a circumstantial evidence for the real situation encountered by the Priests. As per the Poet, here mythical God Indra does not use his regular but the most potent weapon Vajra/Thunderbolt but applies a new thing, ***Himen*** to kill Arbuda (the word Arbuda is also found in verses of the Earliest Mandala **Rv-2,11,20** and **Rv-2.14,4**). Here Sanskrit word ***Himen*** may be interpreted as heavy Snow-fall /snowstorm (Griffith translated it as a frost) and it conveys us that the Poet had reached the place where snow-fall was a common thing. It means, at that time, the Priests were present in the mountainous region of the western part of Rigvedic Territory where snow-fall or ice accumulation was experienced everywhere and hence there was no water scarcity at all. Therefore, there were no foes like Vritra or Arbuda who kidnaps the rain cloud or Ahisuva /dragon who blocks the flow of the rivers. Although ***Shata Himah***/ hundred winters, a generic phrase is found in Mandala-2 and 6 as well; the two out of the Five Early Mandalas but it is mainly used for demanding longevity and sustenance in the harsh winters from the Deities, and does not demonstrate the Priests residing in a snow bound region at that particular time period.

` Some variants of word Hima found in the Three Late Mandalas of Rigved are given as under. ***Himen*** –Rv-1.116,8; 1.119,6; Rv-8.73,3 ***Himavyeva***- Rv-1.34,1 ***Hima-vanta*** –Rv-10.121,4; ***Hima***-Rv-10.37,10. However, use of the word ***Himen*** in the verse **RV-8.32,26** points out the mountainous region located to west of river **Sindhu** bordering modern Afghanistan as in the **All Five Late Mandalas**; western rivers like river **Sindhu** and river **Rasa** find their mention. Among the **Five Early Mandalas**, only in **Mandala-4**, we find the western rivers like **Sindhu**, **Sarayu**, and **Rasa**. Hence here the word ***Himen***/ **हिमेन** stands for **Snow** only.

b. Heavy torrential rain on the mountain crushes demon Vritra:

The **Mandala-8** Poet in the verse **Rv-8.63,12** has described that it is the **Rudra effect** that slays **Vritra**.

Rv-8.63,12: *asme **rudrā mehanā parvatāso vṛtrahatye** bharahūtau sajoṣāḥ |*
yaḥ śaṃsate stuvate dhāyi pajra indrajyeṣṭhā asmānavantu devāḥ ||

With us are **raining Rudras**, clouds accordant in call to battle, at the **death of Vrtra**,
The strong assigned to him who sings and praises. May Gods with Indra at their head protect us.

In the above verse, ***rudrā mehanā parvatāso vṛtrahatye* /रुद्रा मेहना पर्वतासो वृत्रहत्य,** means due to **'Rudras** or **torrential rains on the mountain causes the death of demon Vritra'.** It means to say that whenever there is a **heavy downpour** in any area, then the Priestly People believed that **Vritra gets killed naturally.**

Here the term **Rudra** stands for the thundercloud or tropical storm (as good as cloud burst) resulting in heavy downpour on the mountains means there is no scope for demon **Vritra** to survive in such adverse condition where heavy rainfall occurs naturally.

Please note that the descriptions illustrating **smiting of Vritra** using the natural methods are not found in the **Six Family Mandalas of Rigved**. On the basis of presence of the terms ***hima*/snow, Rudra,** and ***parvata*/mountain** in the above two **Mandala-8 verses** manifest that at that time, the Composers resided to the Westside of river **Sindhu.** It indirectly means that the part of **Rigvedic Territory** located to west of river **Sindhu** had no paucity of water as it received heavy rains (from the western disturbances?) and the existence of the snow-laden mountains in the region.

The above mentioned tales are the first time noticed in the **Mandala-8** whose major part was composed on the west side of river **Sindhu**. Please note that in the **first thirty hymns of Mandala-8**, river **Sindhu** appears about **six times**. Moreover, in **Mandala-8**, we find maximum numbers of **Dana-stuti Yajnas** performed by the **Rigvedic Priests** for several **Unfamiliar Tribe Leaders** who are not seen in action during the period of the **Six Family Mandalas** (excluding **Five Tribes of Nahusha**). It implicitly tells us that in the **western region** of **Rigvedic Territory**, there was no scarcity of water and hence the people lived there were economically better placed than the **eastern part** of **Rigvedic Territory** (east of river **Sindhu**).

In short, character ***Vritra* is the poetic documentation of <u>rain deficiency or drought</u>.**

II. "Vritra" the term is applied for the "Aryas" who opposed the Priests and Bharatas:

The Poets of **Mandal-6** and **Mandal-7** in the following verses have used **Vritra** as the adjective to denote **Arya** as the **adversaries** or **trouble maker** for the **Priests**. Here the word **Vritra** stands for a barrier, obstacle or impeder or hurdle (**Vritra Mentality--Bad Aryas**).

Rv-6.22,10: **आर्याणि वृत्रा करो/** ***āryāṇi vṛtrā karo***

Rv-6.33,3: **वृत्राण्यार्या/** ***vṛtrāṇyāryā***

Rv-6.60,6: हतो वृत्राण्यार्या/ ***hato vṛtrāṇyāryā***

Rv-7.83,1: **वृत्रा हतमार्याणि /** ***vṛtrā hatamāryāṇi***

In other words, during the composition of **Mandala-6** and **7**, but earlier to the **War of Ten Kings**, the Poets from two families have identified the **Leaders of other Vedic tribes** who lived in the Rigvedic Territory as the **hostile Aryas.** This is because they strongly opposed the **beliefs and practices of Vedic Doctrine** (especially the Vedic characters **Indra** and **Yajna** as hinted in the verses **Rv-7.18,16** and **Rv-7.83,7** respectively) and the expansion of realm of the **Bharatas** since **inception of Rigved** and therefore, the Composers of these two distinct Mandalas have purposely equated their behaviour with the atmospheric demon **Vritra**.

Additionally, in the Last Mandala hymn **Rv-10.69** as well, some unidentified **Arya** has been portrayed as possessing the **mentality of Vritra,** This may be due to the fact that a particular **Arya** in some way, would have obstructed the **progress of the Vedic Philosophy**.

Rv-10.69,6: ***vṛtrāṇyāryā*/ वृत्राण्यार्या जिगेथ- Agni** has overcome the **barrier** known as **Arya**.

As a matter of fact, the Rigvedic Poets in some verses have termed themselves as the **light seeking Aryas/** ***jyotiridāryāya/ jyotirāryam/ jyotiścakrathurāryāya*** (means the members of Priestly Community) as the **Good Aryas** (including Bharatas), and the People who spoke the **archaic Sanskrit** but did not believe in **Vedic Philosophy** as the **Bad Aryas**.

It means to say that since **pre-Rigvedic time**, in the Vedic world, there existed two types of **archaic Sanskrit speaking People**;

1. The people believed in **Indra** and **Yajna** (the **light seeking** or **knowledge-oriented** or **Good Aryas**).

2. The people who strongly opposed the Vedic beliefs such as **Indra** and **Yajna**, means they possessed **Vritra Mentality (bad Aryas)**.

Out of the **four references** mentioned earlier wherein the **Aryas** are designated as having **Vritra mentality**, here we would discuss about the **Mandala-7** verse belonging to a war hymn in detail.

Mandala-7 Poet from the **Vasistha Family** in one of the war hymns but addressed to **Indra-Varuna** in the verse **Rv-7.83,1** has talked about the both Gods extending necessary help to **Bharata** king **Sudasa** to neutralize the personal enemies of the Priests and Bharata who are described to be the **Dasas**, and the **Aryas possessing the behaviour of Vritra**.

Rv-7.83,1: *yuvāṃ narā paśyamānāsa āpyaṃ prācā ghavyantaḥ pṛthuparśavo yayuḥ* |
dāsā ca vṛtrā hatamāryāṇi ca sudāsamindrāvaruṇāvasāvatam ||

युवां नरा॒पश्यमानास॒ आप्यं प्रा॒चा ग॒व्यन्तः॑ पृथु॒पर्शवोययुः। **दासां च वृ॒त्रा ह॒तमार्याणि च सु॒दासंमिन्द्रावरु॒णावंसावतम्** ||

Looking to you and your alliance, O ye Men, armed with broad axes they went forward, fain for spoil.
Ye smote and slew **his Dasa and his Aryan enemies**, and **helped Sudas** with favour, **Indra-Varuna**.

From the above **Mandala-7 reference,** it can be said that, although some people belonged to the **class of the Arya**, still their behaviour was like **dragon Vritra**. Hence it is essential to know more about the **Aryas** who always posed a challenge to the **Priests** and also **Bharatas**. **Mandala-6** verse **Rv-6.22,10** provides proper clue about the same.

RV-6.22,10: *ā saṃyatamindra ṇaḥ svastiṃ śatrutūryāya bṛhatīmamṛdhrām* |
*yayā dāsāny**ā**ryā**ṇi** **vṛtrā karo** vajrin sutukā **nāhuṣā**ṇi* ||

Poet in the above verse, has linked some un-identified **Aryas** who have **mind-set of Vritra** to the ancient king **Nahusha**/***Nahusa***. Therefore, it can be said that, there were the **Aryas** who happened to be the **descendants of ancient king Nahusha,** yet regularly opposed the philosophy (***beliefs and practices***) of the **Rigvedic Priests**.

Additionally, **Mandala-6** verse **Rv-6.46,7** links ancient king **Nahusha/*Nahusa*** with the **Five Tribes of Rigved**. Based on the above references, it can be said that since pre-Rigvedic time, the **Leaders of the Five Tribes** i.e. **Anu**, **Druhyu**, **Puru**, **Turvasa** and **Yadu** (also known as the **Tribes of Nahusha** or the **People of Nahusha**) like their ancestor **Nahusha**, they strongly opposed the two key elements of Vedic Ideology i.e. **Indra** and **Yajna**.

However, after their defeat in the **War of Ten Kings**, the **Five Tribes** accepted **Indra** as their Supreme God and started attending **Yajna** ritual. Verse **Rv-1.108,8** attests the same.

III. "**Vritra" also indicates the enemies of king Sudasa denoted in the verse Rv-3.53,11:**

In the earlier section, we have discussed about the **Five Tribes** who belonged to the class of the **Aryas** (the speakers of **archaic Sanskrit**) exhibited the attitude of **Vritra**. Here we would see the application of term **Vritra** as the enemy of king **Sudasa**.

Rv-3.53,11: *upa preta kuśikāścetayadhvamaśvaṃ rāye pra **muñcatā sudāsaḥ*** |
*rājā **vṛtraṃ** jaṅghanat prāghapāghudaghathā yajāte **vara ā pṛthivyāḥ*** ||

Come forward, **Kusikas**, and be attentive; let loose **Sudas's horse** to win him riches.
East, west, and north, let the King slay the **foeman**, then at earth's choicest place perform his worship.

Meanings of the three key words used by the Poet in the original verse are as under.

1. ***prāgapāgudagathā***: / **प्रागपा॒गुद्ग॒था-- *prach***/East, ***apach***/West, ***udach***/North directions.
2. ***vṛtraṃ***/ **वृ॒त्रं--** a **foe** or an **enemy** (but not the atmospheric demon **Vritra**).
3. ***vara ā pṛthivyāḥ/* व॒र आ पृ॑थि॒व्याः--** the **best place on Earth.**

Mandala-3 Poet belonging to **Visvamitra** clan in the verse **Rv-3.23,4** has already identified **Ilaspade** as the probable location that could fulfil the criterion of ***vara ā pṛthivyāḥ*** / the best place to live on Earth.

The Poet of the verse **Rv-3.53,11** wants to convey that the enemies are already present in the three major directions (east, west and north), means at that moment, **Sudasa** is stationed in the **southern part**, but to perform **Yajna** in the **Ilaspade** region he needs to overcome them. The Poet has enigmatically described the futuristic victory of the king as '***Asva* of Sudasa has to move freely in that region**' which indirectly means, **Ashva** of the king can enjoy the freedom only when **Ilaspade** area comes under the control of king **Sudasa**.

In all probabilities, the members of Priestly Community were pestering **Sudasa** to go for war and capture the **Ilaspade** area located in the northern direction as it was the **most auspicious place** where their ancestors lived once and wherein the rivers like **Apaya** and **Drisadvati** joined their most beloved river **Saraswati** (see **Rv-3.23,4**).

However, the most surprise element here is, the Poet has used the word **Vritra** as an adjective to denote the unknown rulers as the **adversaries** of the **Priests** who are present in three directions. It means to say that in the afore-mentioned verse, the term **Vritra** stands for a barrier, an obstacle or an impeder or hurdle and not to be taken as an **atmospheric demon Vritra** who is generally believed to have taken water of the whole world in his captivity.

IV. "Vritra" also manifests a troublemaker or a character who interferes in Yajna:

In the two verses of the hymn **Rv-4.42** that is dedicated to **Indra** and **Varuna**, the Composer has called **Trasadasyu** as the ***vṛtraturam*** / वृत्रहणं or Vritra killer. The Poet has equated the act of **slaying Vritra by Trasadasyu** with the action of God **Indra's smiting the enemies** of Vedic People and therefore, conferred him the title of ***ardhadevam*** or **Demi-god.**

Rv-4.42,8: *asmākam **atra pitaras** ta āsan sapta ṛṣayo **daurgahe** badhyamāne* |
*ta āyajanta trasadasyum asyā indraṃ na **vṛtraturam ardhadevam*** ||

अस्माकमत्रं पितरस्त आंसन्सप्त ऋषंयो दौर्गहे बध्यमांने । त आयंजन्त त्रसदंस्युमस्या इन्द्रं न वृंत्रतुरंमधदेवम् ॥

Our **fathers** then were these, the **Seven Rsis**, what time the **son of Durgaha** was **captive**.
For her they gained by **sacrifice Trasadasyu**, a **demi-god**, **like Indra conquering foemen**.

Rv-4.42,9: ***purukutsānī*** *hi vām adāśad dhavyebhir indrāvaruṇā namobhiḥ* |
*athā rājānaṃ **trasadasyum** asyā **vṛtrahaṇaṃ** dadathur **ardhadevam*** ||

The **spouse of Purukutsa** gave oblations to you, O **Indra-Varuna**, with homage.
Then unto her ye gave King **Trasadasyu**, the **demi-god**, **the slayer of the foeman**.

Please note that as per the content of Rigvedic Poems, an **atmospheric demon Vritra** is frequently killed by the **warrior God Indra** and not by any human being. Hence here the word **Vritra** stands for the **Foes of the Vedic People**. Then a question arises, who could be the hidden enemies of the Priests? Following verse from **Mandala-4** depicts **Trasadasyu** kills **Dasyus** who probably interfere in **Yajna** ceremony.

Rv-4.38,1*:* *uto hi vāṃ dātrā santi pūrvā yā **pūrubhyas trasadasyur** nitośe* |
*kṣetrāsāṃ dadathur urvarāsāṃ ghanaṃ **dasyubhyo abhibhūtim ugram*** ||

उतो हि वां दात्रा सन्ति पूर्वा या पूरुभ्यस्त्रसदंस्युर्नितोशे । क्षेत्रासां दंदथुरुर्वरासां घनं दस्युंभ्यो अभिभूंतिमुग्रम् ॥

From you two came the gifts in days afore-time which **Trasadasyu granted to the Purus**.
Ye gave the winner of our fields and plough-lands, and the strong **smiter** who **subdued the Dasyus**.

As the **Dasyus** (vultures) and **Dasas** (hyenas) often created problems for the **Yajna worshippers/Priestly People** and therefore, king **Trasadasyu** took the lead in slaying them, very similar to **Indra's** act (mythical depiction). This initiative of **Trasadasyu** made the Poet to designate him as ***Ardha-Deva*** or **demi-god** in comparison to **Indra's** frequent killings of the regular enemies of the Priests such as demon **Vritra**, **Ahi**, **Dasyus** and **Dasas**.

V. "***Vritra"* is also called as *Susna* (शुष्ण) in Mandala-5:**

Atri, the **Lead Composer of Mandala-5** in the verse **Rv-5.32,4** has portrayed **Susna** as **Danava** who is described as the **child of mist/ मि॒होनपा॑तं.**

Rv-5.32,4: *tyaṃ cid eṣāṃ svadhayā madantam **miho napātaṃ** suvṛdhaṃ tamoghām* |
*vṛṣaprabharmā **dānavasya** bhāmaṃ vajreṇa vajrī ni **jaghāna śuṣṇam*** ||
त्यं चि॑देषां स्व॒धया॒मदं॑न्तं **मि॒होनपा॑तं** सु॒वृधं॑ तमो॒गाम् । वृषं॑प्रभर्मा **दा॒न॒वस्य॒**भामं॒वज्रे॑ण व॒ज्री नि ज॑घान॒**शुष्ण॑म्** ॥

Him, whom the heavenly food of these delighted, **child of the mist**, strong waxing, couched in darkness,
Him the bolt-hurling thunderer with his lightning smote down and slew, the **Danava's wrath-fire, Susna**

Additionally, in the verse **Rv-5.32,8** from the **same hymn**; the Poet has described **Danava** as **footless/ अ॒पाद॑म॒त्रं** (like a serpent), evil speaker/ **मृ॒ध्रवा॑चम्** and **honey drinker / मधु॒पं.**

Rv-5.32,8: *tyaṃ cid arṇam **madhupaṃ** śayānam asinvaṃ vavram mahy ādad ughraḥ* |
apādam** atram mahatā vadhena ni duryoṇa āvṛṇaṅ **mṛdhravācam ||
The fierce God seized that **huge and restless coiler**, insatiate, **drinker of the sweets**, recumbent.
And with his mighty weapon in his dwelling smote down the **footless evil-speaking ogre**.

Although, in the complete hymn **Rv-5.32**, there is no mention of the term **Vritra**, but the **foe of Indra** has been depicted as **Danava,** the word generally used for the **son of Danu** who is in the text commonly treated as the **mother of demon Vritra.** In the **Late Mandala** verses **Rv-1.32.9** and **7**, **Vritra** is clearly defined as the **son of Danu** who is **footless**.

Rv-1.32,9*:* *nīcāvayā abhavad **vṛtraputrendro** asyā ava vadharjabhāra* |
*uttarā sūradharaḥ putra āsīd **dānuḥ** śaye sahavatsā na dhenuḥ* ||
Then humbled was the strength of **Vrtra's mother**: **Indra hath cast his deadly bolt against her**.
The mother was above, the son was under and like a cow beside **her calf lay Danu**.

Rv-1.32,7: ***apādahasto** apṛtanyadindramāsya vajramadhi sānau jaghāna* |
*vṛṣṇo vadhriḥ pratimānaṃ bubhūṣan purutrā **vṛtro** aśayad vyastaḥ* ||

Footless and **handless** still he challenged **Indra**, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders.
Emasculate yet claiming manly vigour, thus **Vrtra** lay with scattered limbs dissevered.

Now, take a close look at the verse **Rv-3.30,8** devoted to **Indra** wherein **Vritra** is described as the **footless and handless** character like a **serpent** and also shown to have related to **Danu.**

Rv-3.30,8: *saha**dānuṃ** puruhūta **kṣiyantamahastamindra** saṃ piṇak kuṇārum* |
*abhi **vṛtraṃ vardhamānaṃ** piyārumapādamindra tavasā jaghantha* ||
स॒हदा॑नुं पुरुहूत क्षि॒यन्त॑महऱस्तमिं॑न्द्र॒सं पिं॑ण॒क्कुणा॑रुम् । अ॒भि **वृ॒त्रं** वर्धमान॒ंपिया॑रुम॒पाद॑मिन्द्र त॒वसा॑ जघन्थ ॥

Thou, Indra, Much-invoked! didst crush to pieces **Kunaru handless fiend** who dwelt with **Danu.**
Thou with might, **Indra, smotest** dead the scorner, **the footless Vrtra** as he waxed in vigour.

In brief, when the above information is seen **in totality**, then it becomes evident that the character ***Susna*** illustrated in the verse **Rv-5.32,4** is nothing but the regular **atmospheric demon Vritra,** who is described to have taken a form of **footless Dragon** or **restless Coiler**.

In sum, the Rigvedic Poets have employed the term "Vritra/वृत्र" in varied contexts.

Primarily, the word Vritra represents a wordy or poetic record of a Natural Calamity or the long duration droughts (taking into consideration *Vritras*/plural) experienced by the Vedic People during the Bronze Age Period.

The term Vritra has been used for the "Five Tribes of Nahusha" and the other people who had crooked mind and hence strongly opposed the key elements of Vedic Philosophy especially Indra and Yajna before the War of Ten Kings.

Additionally, it has also been applied for the undesired interference of the Dasas (hyenas) and Dasyus (vultures) who often arrived at the site of Yajna to eat the flesh of an animal being sacrificed in the ritual.

VI. Reference:

1. "Rig Veda" (Bilingual), Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896) in PDF.